

Describes Role of OAC and Arsenal in Joliet's Growth

The Army Ordnance installation here is providing employment for 10,000 local persons and is contributing about \$3.5 million a month in payrolls to the economic prosperity of the Joliet area.

These facts and others were made known yesterday to members of the Joliet Kiwanis club at their weekly luncheon meeting in the Louis Joliet Hotel by Gordon W. Hirtle, public information officer of the Ordnance Ammunition Center here.

The ten thousand workers at the installation are divided into three groups, Hirtle explained. About 4,500 are employed by the U. S. Rubber company, which operates the Kankakee unit of Joliet Arsenal in the manufacture of TNT and other explosives. Another 4,500 workers are employed by the government at the Elwood unit of Joliet Arsenal, where finished ammunition is loaded and assembled. The remaining 900 workers are on the staff of the Ordnance Ammunition Center, which under Brig. Gen. W. E. Laidlow directs the activities of Joliet Arsenal and 22 other government plants thruout the country.

NO REDUCTION in employment is expected at the Kankakee unit of the Arsenal in coming months — in fact, said Hirtle, "U. S. Rubber expects their employment to increase a little." However, the government is now making a reduction-in-force at the Elwood unit which will reduce employment there from the present 4,500 to about 3,500 within the next two months. OAC expects little if any reduction in its work force of 900 between now and the end of the year.

The combined payroll of the three groups, it is anticipated, will decrease to around \$3 million per month, about \$500,000 less than the present figure, when the total work force drops from the present 10,000 to the expected 9,000 level.

In response to a question, Hirtle explained that the current Korean truce does not mean the end of the U. S. ammunition production program. He emphasized that the Army strongly desires to reduce expenditures at the earliest moment and avoid spending taxpayers' money for ammunition at a

rate no longer needed. However, he pointed out, the national interest demands that U. S. reserves of ammunition be strengthened, and that ammunition plants be kept in at least partial operation ready for any further emergencies. If the Korean truce results in a general peace, some additional curtailment of ammunition production will probably be necessary, but for the time being the emphasis is on "continuing preparedness."

IN DESCRIBING the national \$2 billion ammunition production program directed by the OAC, Hirtle pointed out that it has three basic parts: (1) Production of the metal parts, which is done by about 4,000 private industrial firms all over the country; (2) production of the propellant and explosive powders, which is carried on at 12 of the 22 OAC installations; and (3) loading and assembly of the parts and the powders into finished ammunition, which is done at OAC's ten loading and assembly plants thruout the country, one of which is the Elwood unit of Joliet Arsenal.

The range and complexity of modern ammunition was also discussed by the speaker, who told the group that OAC directs nearly all U. S. production of artillery shells, mortar shells, rockets, aerial bombs, grenades, mines, pyrotechnics and miscellaneous ammunition.

THE DETAILED and exhaustive inspection that the Ordnance Corps gives to all items of ammunition before they are accepted for use by U. S. troops was also mentioned by Hirtle. He stated, "There may be some allied countries that turn out ammunition as good as ours, but no one turns out better — and those nations on the other side do not make as good."